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ABSTRACT

A study compared and contrasted various early intervention reading programs, examining 12 early intervention programs in 10 school districts within 60 miles of the Denver metropolitan area. Programs selected were considered to be district-wide, had been in place for at least a year, had coordinators who agreed to be interviewed, were designed for students in first and/or second grade in a one-on-one or small group situation, and agreed to let the researchers observe a "typical lesson." Eighteen questions (based on J. Pikulski's "characteristics common to successful early intervention programs") were asked of the coordinators, and for each question, researchers read through the answers and established categories, allowing reporting of much data and generating major themes. Observation showed that most lessons were taught in 30 minutes, were focused, and moved along quickly. Results are discussed according to Pikulski's characteristics. Findings suggest that many of the programs did not depend on "strong, effective programs of regular reading instruction" and that although all coordinators considered reading for meaning as an overall goal, none mentioned fluency as a major goal. Ten recommendations for districts interested in implementing "research-based" early intervention programs resulted from the study. (Includes a list of the school district and the program name and a graph showing the program match with Pikulski's characteristics. Contains 10 references. Appended are interview questions and a lesson observation form.) (NKA)

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An Examination of **Early Intervention Reading Programs** in the Denver Area

March 1993

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An Examination of **Early Intervention Reading Programs** in the Denver Area

PURPOSES AND PROCEDURES

Purpose

There is a growing trend across the United States to implement early intervention programs for children who struggle with reading. The most well-known of these programs is Reading Recovery. Started in New Zealand by Marie Clay and brought to the United States through The Ohio State University, Reading Recovery has been widely implemented in school districts across the United States with a great deal of success (Lyons, Pinnell & DeFord, 1993; Pikulski, 1995; Clay, 1993b). In fact, in many states, Reading Recovery is the only early intervention program in use.

In the Denver area, a variety of early intervention programs are being implemented by local school districts. Reading Recovery is but one of them. The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the various early intervention programs. Information gained from interviews with program coordinators and observations of early intervention lessons will help provide information on program goals, sources of funding, selection of students into the program, and the components of a typical lesson. Findings and recommendations from this study may help school districts who are considering the implementation of an early intervention program and/or who are interested in strengthening their current programs.

Identification of Districts

Twelve early intervention programs in ten school districts within 60 miles of the Denver Metropolitan Area were examined. (Two districts had more than one program at the time of data collection. In one instance, the same program was being implemented in two different districts but coordinated by the same person. This person was interviewed only once. In another instance, two different districts were using the same program. The coordinator of each of these two programs was interviewed. Therefore, the chart listing the districts and names of programs has thirteen programs listed.) Programs were selected on the following criteria: they were generally considered to be district-wide programs (instead of being implemented at only one or two schools); each had been in place for at least a year; each had a coordinator or director who would agree to be interviewed; each was designed for students in first and/or second grade in a one-on-one or small group situation; and each agreed to let the researchers observe a lesson that was considered "a best example" of a "typical lesson" in the program. A list of districts and the names of the programs include:

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School District	Name of Program
Cherry Creek School District	Collaborative Literacy Intervention Project (CLIP) Reading Recovery Success in Primary Reading (SuPR)
Douglas County Schools	Program of Writing, Enrichment, and Reading (POWER)
Weld County District 6 (Greeley)	Accelerated Reading (AR)
St. Vrain School District	Right Start
Jefferson County Schools	Success From the Start (SFS)
Adams County 12, Five Star Schools	Collaborative Literacy Intervention Project (CLIP)
Littleton Public Schools	Early Success (ES)
Adams County District 50	Read From the Start (RFS)
Poudre School District	Reading Bridges
Denver Public Schools	Success in Early Reading (SER)* Success in Primary Reading (SuPR)

*program is in English and Spanish

Development of Interview Questions

According to Pikulski (1995), there are numerous characteristics common to successful reading intervention programs. These include:

1) the dependence on a strong, effective program of regular classroom reading instruction;
2) reading for meaning is an overall consideration;
3) intervention instruction is frequent and regular;
4) pupil-to-teacher ratio is small;
5) fluency is a major goal;
6) instructional procedures are used to introduce new books in order to insure that students will be successful;
7) texts are carefully selected and sequenced to ensure student success;
8) word learning activities are used to help children become familiar with print;
9) writing is used to teach and extend word identification skills;
10) there is considerable teacher decision making within a well-defined sequence of instructional activities;
11) instruction is fast paced;
12) activities completed at home extend student opportunities for learning;
13) assessment is meaningful, practical, efficient, and ongoing;
14) teacher training is practical and ongoing;
15) teachers believe in their programs and their students' ability to learn to read; and
16) students build confidence and come to see themselves as readers and authors.

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Using Pikulski's work, one researcher developed questions for the interviews that would attempt to capture information on each of these characteristics. These questions were shared with the second researcher, who helped make suggestions and changes. Other questions were developed to solicit information that might be helpful in comparing and contrasting the programs, such as background information about each program, how each is funded, the process for student selection, and data on student achievement. In all, eighteen different questions were developed. (See Appendix A for a copy of the interview form.)

Interviews

Three different researchers served as interviewers: one conducted one interview, a second conducted six interviews, and the third conducted four interviews. All interviewers met to discuss the procedures. Each agreed to tape record the interviews and script answers under each question. Each agreed to collect any supporting handouts that were provided by those who were interviewed.

After the first interview, the interviewers met to discuss the process. Based on the information given, several questions were revised and prompts were added to other questions. All twelve interviews were given during a three month period in the spring of 1997. Each interview took about two hours and all were taped recorded. Transcripts were not made of the tapes; interviewers used them as backup if they could not interpret their notes. All interviews except one took place where the coordinator/director of the program worked. (Note: The word "coordinator" appears throughout the report and is used to represent the person who was interviewed. Some would not give themselves this title.)

Observations of Lessons

The researchers were also interested in observing a "good example" of a "typical lesson" taught in the program. The purpose was to get a sense of how the program was actually implemented. The researchers were especially interested in matching the answers to Question Eight ("What does a typical lesson look like?") to what was observed during the teaching of the lessons. In most cases, the lessons observed were taught by teachers in the program; in four cases, the lessons were taught by the coordinators of the programs.

As the lessons were observed, the interviewers remained as unobtrusive as possible. Each completed a Lesson Observation Form while observing. (See Appendix B for a copy of the form.)

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

The interviews and observations provided considerable information as to how these twelve early intervention programs were implemented in ten different school districts. The first step in the analysis involved the integration of information recorded by the three interviewers. For each question asked, the researchers read through the answers to establish categories to reflect the nature of the responses for each question. This procedure allowed for a large amount of data to be reported in a manageable format as well as indicating the frequency of major themes present in the interview responses. When feasible, data are reported by theme.

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This section of the report presents the results of analyzing responses to each of the interview questions. Interview questions appear in italics.

Question 1: *What is the research base for your program?*

Three names were frequently mentioned when answering this question: Marie Clay, Brian Cambourne, and L.S. Vygotsky. Each coordinator cited Marie Clay's work as the research base for her district's program. One gave a brief history of Clay's work, noting that in the 1960s she observed and recorded behaviors of good and poor readers in many classrooms in New Zealand. From her research, she designed the Observation Survey (1985; 1993a). In the 1970s, Marie Clay talked with classroom teachers about developing procedures for teaching struggling readers the same strategies that the more proficient readers used. These procedures became the lesson format used in Reading Recovery. Almost all programs included in this study use a lesson format that is very closely related to the one developed by Marie Clay.

Brian Cambourne's Model for Literacy Learning (Cambourne, 1988) served as a research base for several programs. In the 1970s, Cambourne carefully observed young children in Australia as they were becoming successful literacy learners. He translated his observations into a set of conditions for learning: immersion, demonstration, expectation, responsibility, use, approximation, response, and engagement. Coordinators noted that these conditions for learning were a part of their programs.

Two coordinators cited the work of L.S. Vygotsky. Each said that Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978), that zone between what a child can accomplish working independently and what the child can accomplish given some assistance, served as a foundation for her program.

The work of Elfrieda Heibert, Patricia Cunningham, and Irene Gaskins was also noted by one coordinator; the latter two names were cited as examples of researchers who have developed strategies that enable students to understand how words work. The strategies developed by these researchers were a part of the district's program.

Question 2: *What are the goals of your program?*

Two major categories emerged from the answers to this question: bring students up to grade level in reading, and provide staff development that will change the way teachers think about the reading process and the way they teach reading.

Bring students up to grade level: All of those interviewed agreed that the main goal of their programs was to bring students up to grade level in reading. Many mentioned that students should be able to function in the "average range" in the classroom, and in order to do this, students had to be taught to be independent, strategic readers.

Staff development for teachers: All but two of those interviewed felt that a second goal was to help teachers change the way they looked at literacy instruction. As one said, "One of our goals is to change teachers" thinking about the way kids learn to read." Included in this change was using assessment to inform instruction, or as one noted, "...[our goal is] to provide excellent staff development for teachers in becoming diagnosticians for reading difficulties."

One program's sole goal was to help classroom teachers learn to examine and reflect upon their own teaching while working one-on-one with a student. The coordinator of this program

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cited research by Lyons, Pinnell, and DeFord (1993) that said until teachers see the effects of working with children in a one-on-one situation, they can't apply the strategies to a group of children.

Question 3: *What needs did you see in your district that led you to choose this particular model of early intervention?*

Several categories emerged from the answers to this question: lack of money to implement Reading Recovery; a change in student population; a changing view of literacy instruction; a need for good staff development; and state mandates, mainly House Bill 1139. Only the first category directly answered the question. The other categories spoke to why districts implemented any type of early intervention program.

Lack of money to implement Reading Recovery: Several of those interviewed noted that the districts they were working in showed an interest in implementing Reading Recovery, but did not feel they could fund it. To implement Reading Recovery, a district must send a teacher to a Reading Recovery training site for a year. The teacher's salary plus room, board, and tuition must also be paid. The teacher returns to the district and trains twelve teachers over the course of a year. Reading Recovery requires that the district follow specific guidelines when training teachers. A place where teachers can work with students "behind the glass" is required. (For a more detailed description of a "behind the glass" session, see Question 11.) Teachers must complete a certain number of hours of coursework including meeting in support groups, and be observed and coached a certain number of times per year. Many districts opted to create other early intervention programs that closely resembled Reading Recovery.

Changing populations: Most of those interviewed said that their districts saw a need for some kind of early intervention program because of the changing population of their students. Teachers noticed that fewer students were coming to school with a knowledge of concepts about print and/or general knowledge about literacy. Mobility rates were rising, and more students seemed unable to learn to read within the classroom. In each district, there seemed to be a large number of students who needed intensive instruction.

Changing views of literacy instruction: In the past few years, there has been a growing recognition that many children will not learn to read simply by being "surrounded by print." Many need direct instruction, either in a one-on-one setting or in small groups where students are taught the specific strategies that will enable them to process text independently. As one noted, "Kids need to be taught to make specific connections."

Need for good staff development: Almost all of those interviewed said that their districts implemented their particular model of early intervention because of the staff development that accompanied it. Teachers working in these programs usually took a great deal of coursework and spent a considerable amount of time in support groups. Question 12 will explain this staff development more in depth.

House Bill 1139: Finally, a few of the coordinators mentioned that state mandates, specifically H.B. 1139, were the reasons why their districts decided to implement an early intervention program. All the districts were looking for ways to implement the intent of the act – all third graders will read at grade level by the end of their third grade year.

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Question 4: *What are the most important features of your program?*

Answers to this question fell in the following categories: excellent staff development; teacher decision-making based on student needs; knowledge of the reading process and assessment; a consistent lesson format that emphasizes teaching students to be strategic, independent readers; and consistency in the teaching of reading among teachers (reading teacher, classroom teachers, special educators). Also mentioned were grouping patterns and parent involvement.

Staff Development: This answer was given by eight of those interviewed. As one said, "The most beneficial [feature] is staff development." Coordinators told of teachers who said the training they received as early intervention teachers was "the best" literacy instruction they had ever had. One coordinator said of herself, "[It] was the most intense and difficult training that I had ever received and it changed my life completely. It's phenomenal what a difference it makes." Another noted that the training gets teachers to look at their own learning which makes them more thoughtful about students' learning. The training puts teachers in the position of being learners themselves. Classroom teachers (rather than reading teachers) who have been trained tend to take ownership for the low readers in their own classrooms, rather than asking for these readers to be sent out of the classroom for reading instruction.

Many mentioned the on-going nature of the staff development. Once trained, teachers attend monthly support groups to continue their learning. Many of the programs require teachers to work with a child "behind the glass" while others observe. After the lesson, those who observed discuss the lesson, and help the teacher reflect on her teaching

Teacher Decision-making: Almost all coordinators mentioned that a strength of their particular program was the opportunity for teachers to make decisions about their teaching based on observation, their knowledge of the reading process, and the needs of the student or group of students. As one said, "I can look at a student and am better at noticing his strengths and needs and can change my prompting accordingly." This same person also noted that, "I can say that teachers who have been trained know what drives their instructional decisions if you ask them. They are not doing things because it is cute or is in the curriculum guide; they know what theory drives their practice."

One coordinator mentioned several ways in which the teacher is making decisions during an early intervention lesson: using running records to decide on a teaching point; giving prompts for figuring out unknown words; giving specific reinforcement when needed; setting a focus for a lesson; and knowing when a child's "cutting edge" has been found.

Consistent lesson plan which includes the teaching of strategies: Almost each person interviewed mentioned that a lesson plan that is consistent and does not vary from its prescribed steps was an important feature. Several made the comment that students who were struggling readers needed a consistent structure. Teachers made decisions about instruction within each step of the plan, but were not able to choose to delete a particular step. Several mentioned that each moment of the lesson was spent on reading or writing activities; off-task behavior was not permitted.

The focus of the lesson is to teach students the strategies they need to become independent readers. Students are taught to process text independently. As one coordinator said, "...Release of responsibility onto the student always undergirds the whole thing." Another said, "We help kids

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form strategies in their heads from our talk and conversations we have with them. For example, we teach the three cueing systems, MSV. We teach students how to ask: What makes sense? (M), What sounds right? (S), and What looks right? (V). Soon the kids start to internalize the talk in their own heads, self-monitor, self-correct, reread, cross check, etc." A third stated, "Meaning is paramount; it drives all instruction. Everything we teach helps the child get meaning from text."

Consistency: Most of those interviewed mentioned that a strength of their program was the consistency in philosophy and language that was promoted among classroom teachers, reading teachers, and in some cases, special education teachers. Classroom teachers were so impressed with the progress their struggling readers were making that they began to inquire about the instruction. This has led to many classroom teachers becoming trained in using adaptations of early intervention lessons with small groups of struggling readers in their own classrooms. Students clearly benefit when their classroom teacher and reading teachers teach the same strategies for figuring out unknown words.

In two districts, important features of the programs involve the teaming of special education teachers, ESL teachers, and reading teachers so that all are using the same lesson format. This provides a common language for discussing the literacy needs of the children in these programs.

Grouping patterns: Several coordinators mentioned that the grouping patterns they used (one-on-one or small group) were important features of their programs. Most of the programs used either one of the two formats. One program used three different models, depending on student need. Some students worked within a one-on-one format, others are in small groups of two or three, and still others are in small groups of five to seven.

Parent involvement: Finally, an important feature mentioned by several coordinators was the parent involvement component of their programs. Question 16 describes this component in more depth.

Question 5: *How is the program funded?*

All of the programs were funded by Title I, district funds, and/or grants. In two districts, programs were totally funded by Title I; in these districts, the program was only in Title I schools. In only one district were no Title I funds used.

Programs in four districts were funded by grants and/or money from foundations in addition to any monies provided by Title I and/or the districts. In two districts, buildings use discretionary funds or could apply for monies provided by a district pool to pay for teachers' salaries, training, and materials.

All but two coordinators expressed that the districts in which they were working were very supportive of and saw the need for early intervention programs.

Question 6: *How many schools/children/teachers are involved in the program? Are paraprofessionals and other non-certified people involved? If so, how?*

Coordinators were easily able to answer the part of the question about the number of schools involved. In six districts, the program was in all schools. (These were the smaller districts.) In districts where the program was not in all buildings, schools most likely to have an early intervention program were Title I schools. It was more difficult to answer the part of the question about the number of children in the program. Coordinators said it was difficult to keep

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track of the number of children involved because students began or exited the program continuously throughout the school year.

Answers to the last part of the question, the number of teachers involved, spanned a wide range. In each district the number varied, depending on how long the program had been implemented. In several districts, classroom teachers, ESL teachers, and/or special education teachers were trained as early intervention teachers but were not actually working one-on-one or in small groups with identified struggling readers. Many of these teachers were adapting the strategies they learned in their training to small groups of students in their own classrooms and teaching situations.

Use of paraprofessionals: Seven of the eleven districts were not using paraprofessionals to teach in their programs. As one coordinator said, "We are very firm about this. These are the kids who are having the most difficulty [in learning to read] and we need to give them the absolute best instruction." Another answered, "So many decisions have to be made in one lesson; those who are involved need an understanding of the reading process and a basic understanding of how kids learn." A third noted, "[Our program] is for a highly trained teacher."

In one program, paraprofessionals teach in the program but must be paired with a teacher who has been trained in the early intervention program. In other programs, paraprofessionals are involved in homework support and other kinds of follow-up activities. They work with students who may not have someone at home who is willing or able to listen to them read.

Question 7: *What is the pupil/teacher ratio?*

Six of the programs have a one-to-one pupil/teacher ratio. Four programs use both one-to-one and small groups of two to four students; two programs use only small groups. Seven of the programs work only with students in the first grade. Five of the programs work with students in both first and second grades.

Question 8: *What does a typical lesson look like? How does this lesson vary from the one used in Reading Recovery? How long (in minutes) is a typical lesson?*

A Reading Recovery lesson has the following parts:

- rereading of a familiar text to build confidence and fluency;
- taking a running record on the text that was read the previous day;
- letter identification or word analysis work based on information from the running record;
- composing and writing a sentence;
- introducing and reading of a new text;
- taking a familiar book and cut up sentence home to read.

In four of the programs, the steps in the lesson are the same as those used in Reading Recovery. In the other programs, the steps of the lesson vary in one of the following ways: the steps are in a different order, a retell component is included, and/or the word analysis/word patterns are taught in a predetermined order rather than from information gleaned from a running record.

In programs where the lesson components are in a different order, the changes are minimal. An example would be that the writing component is completed after the new text is introduced. Another example would be that phonics instruction is woven throughout the lesson rather than

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taught after the running record. Several programs added a retell component to the steps of the lesson. In each case, the retell was done after the running record.

All coordinators said that the lessons in their particular programs were supposed to be taught in 30 minutes. Some noted that this goal is not always met. In programs where teachers work with small groups, the lesson (by design) often takes 40-45 minutes. In at least one program, the components of the lesson are spread across two days if the teacher is working with small groups.

Question 9: *How are children selected into the program? (How are students identified?)*

The most common answers included the use of Clay's Observation Survey (1985; 1993a), an adaptation of Clay's Survey, and/or teacher observation guided by a rating scale. In districts where the program includes working with second graders, an IRI or information from leveled books may be used.

Many districts ask teachers at the end of kindergarten or the beginning of first grade to rank students according to some criteria. Criteria may include reading and writing tasks and/or teacher observation. The students in the lowest quartile are then given the Observation Survey (Clay, 1985; 1993a) or a variation of it.

In other districts, all students are given a district-developed reading assessment at the end of kindergarten or the beginning of first grade. Students who score in the lowest percentiles are selected into the program, based on teacher judgment (often accompanied with rating scales), and potential for success in the program. Once in the program, students are often given a complete Observation Survey (Clay, 1985; 1993a) or adaptation of it.

The biggest adaptation of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1985; 1993a) is to use a different word list. The one in the Survey includes words with which children in the United States may not be familiar. Also, the Survey includes norms that were developed in New Zealand. A group of educators in the Denver area have developed norms using children from the area (Felknor, Milner & Winterscheidt, 1994). Many districts use these norms.

Question 10: *How do students exit from the program? What is the length of intervention for a "typical" child?*

The most common answers given for the first part of this question were teacher judgment based on observation, conversations with the classroom teacher, and the use of benchmark books. In any case the goal is to move the child into the middle or average group of readers in a class. As one coordinator said, "The challenge there is getting the [classroom] teacher to identify exactly what 'average' is."

All said that students should not exit from the program unless they are reading at grade level or at "the appropriate instructional level." This is often determined by having them read from a series of leveled books called benchmark books. In most programs, books at levels 15-20 are books that students at the end of grade one would read if they were reading at grade level. While a student reads, the teacher takes a running record to check to see if the student is independently using the strategies that have been taught.

In at least three programs, students are given parts of the Clay Observation Survey (1985; 1993a) or a district adaptation of the Survey before they exit.

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When asking the second part of the question, interviewers were reminded several times that as far as early intervention is concerned, there is no such thing as a "typical" child. In six of the programs, students are involved for 12-16 weeks. In four programs, there is no specific time length. In one program, students may be involved for more than a year.

Question 11: *What kind of training and coaching are provided for the teachers/parapros/other non-certified staff?*

All programs provide some kind of coaching, ranging from once a week to once every other month. The most common number was once a month. Teachers who are in their second or third years of involvement are coached less. In most of the programs, the coaches were also tutoring students themselves.

About half the programs have bimonthly or monthly meetings and seminars that teachers and/or paraprofessionals attend. In most programs, these sessions are mandatory. At these meetings, teachers often view and discuss videotapes of tutoring sessions; at other times, teachers discuss what's going well and where they need help.

Four of the coordinators said that training "behind the glass" was an important part of their programs. These sessions ranged from once a month to once a semester. One coordinator gave a good overview of a "behind the glass" session used in her program. The child's classroom teacher, parent(s), and principal are all invited to observe. Other early intervention teachers attend and one serves as a facilitator. Before the parent and child come, the teacher presents information learned from assessing the child. The teacher working "behind the glass" asks those observing to focus on a specific aspect of the lesson. An example might be pacing. Those observing complete an observation log and a "glows and grows" sheet. After the child and parent leave, the classroom teacher and early intervention teacher discuss the "glows and grows" – what went well and what the teacher might try to improve.

All programs require some kind of training, perhaps a class taken for university credit, as part of their programs. In both CLIP and Reading Recovery, the class spans the entire academic year with additional days in the summer. In most of the other programs, training takes place before school begins and ranges from 6 to 30 hours. Those who take this training must also attend monthly meetings/seminars.

Question 12: *Are there parts of your program you would like to improve or change? Please describe. What would it take to make these improvements?*

Increased Coaching: By far, the most common answer was to increase the amount of coaching and the amount of time that support groups met. Nine of those interviewed spoke to this need. All nine noted that the coaching component is significant to the success of their programs and they felt that the more the teachers were coached, the better they taught.

Application of Teaching to Groups: The second most common answer was to do a better job of applying the steps of the one-on-one sessions to small groups. Four coordinators mentioned this, saying that they felt the small group lessons were not as effective as the one-on-one lessons. Helping classroom teachers better understand and support the program and communicating better with them was mentioned by four coordinators. As one said, "We are working toward the classroom support, but it's not easy to change the thinking and to change the

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way you teach kids to read from one room to the next." Another said, "[We need to work on] how to help teachers collaborate, because without collaborative planning, it goes down."

Other answers included: longer coursework and more time for staff development (3), doing a better job at keeping track of data collected (1), developing a program for Spanish speakers (1), streamlining the assessment process (1), increasing district backing (1), improving results in writing (1), implementing one program across the district (1).

Every coordinator said that money would be needed to make the improvements they wanted to see. Although almost every coordinator felt as if the district they worked for supported the program financially, each felt that more money was needed. Several said that as House Bill 1139 is implemented, they might see more money funneled into early intervention programs. One mentioned that stable funding on the part of the district would allow her to develop a three-year plan. As it was, she did not know from year to year how much money she would have to implement the program.

Question 13: *What do the teachers say about the program?*

All those interviewed spoke enthusiastically when answering this question. Two main themes emerged: good staff development that led to a change in teachers' thinking about literacy instruction, and a change in students' abilities to read.

Good Staff Development: Nine mentioned that teachers in their programs said the training they got as early intervention teachers was the best staff development they had ever received. When asked this question, one coordinator went to her files and pulled quotes from teachers who had taken a required course. One teacher wrote, "This is the best training on reading I've ever had; it is the most valuable to date." In another program a teacher wrote, "(Name of program) training has been so valuable to my growth as a teacher and has taught me to 'find the good and 'praise it' when I work with all kids." From the same program a teacher wrote, "My training in (name of program) has been an incredible asset to my entire classroom. I have learned to apply what I do on a daily basis with my individual student to my entire class." A teacher from a third program said, "(Name of program) has changed everything I've learned. I thought it was my job to have all the answers and give all the answers. Now, I'm a prompter: I teach strategies so that kids can help themselves."

Two coordinators mentioned that the depth of learning on the part of teachers involved was significant. Teachers knew what they were doing and why. When asked to explain further, they mentioned that the teachers learned research-based strategies from coursework, applied it immediately and regularly, and were coached and met in support groups as they implemented what they had learned.

A change in students' reading abilities: Coordinators frequently mentioned students' growth in reading as something that teachers often commented on. As one coordinator said, "It's evident we are making a difference." Another said, "They (the teachers) are amazed that the kids who seem like they are special ed or are not going to make it can learn to use the strategies." Several coordinators mentioned that teachers say their students move forward more quickly with early intervention one-on-one or small group sessions.

Two coordinators mentioned that there have been fewer referrals to special education since the early intervention program started. Two coordinators also said that teachers sometimes

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struggle with the work load and level of commitment it takes to be an early intervention teacher. This is especially true of classroom teachers who work with a student over and above the time they spend in classroom teaching.

Question 14: *What do the students say about the program?*

None of the programs collected data directly from students, but all coordinators easily answered the question. The most common answer, cited by ten coordinators, was that the students felt a sense of empowerment as readers. They felt successful, proud, and good about themselves because they had learned to read. Four coordinators mentioned that the students loved to come to lessons. As one said, "There's no resistance to coming to the one-on-one or group. It's a half hour they feel good about." Four mentioned that students liked the routine and structure found in the lessons.

Other answers included the fact that students were motivated, they liked the individual attention, and they liked to talk about books. One coordinator was candid enough to say, "There are a few kids we can't reach and for whom the program doesn't work; I wish we had the answers for every single child, not most kids, but every child." Another said, "We do have kids who are resistant and who struggle and who this doesn't work for, but this is not typical."

Question 15: *What do parents say about the program?*

Most of the coordinators had collected data from parents. The most common answer to the question, cited six times, was that parents were happy with their child's gain in reading. One coordinator said, "We have lots of positive letters from parents. One wanted to nominate (name of teacher) for sainthood. They think it's a miracle. For some kids it is the key that unlocks it (reading) for them." Another said, "The parents think it is the next best thing to sliced bread. They are amazed at the quick progress and growth, the higher self-esteem, and the fact that the child will stand up in front of the class and talk and share."

Several coordinators mentioned that parents like the fact that books come home each night. As one said, "Parents like that a book at the right level comes home each night; then they don't have to choose one." A few mentioned that parents say their children are more excited about going to school because they can read better, and parents mention how happy they are that their child is receiving one-on-one or small-group attention. In one district, a parent whose child was in the program was staffed into special education. The parent wanted the child to stay with the early intervention program.

Question 16: *Is there a home/school component to your program? If so, please describe it.*

Every program included a home component, and each coordinator considered it extremely important to the success of the program. As one coordinator said, "Communication and accountability build a positive interaction which the program requires in order to be successful." Another said, "Our job is to help educate parents."

In most of the programs, parents were asked to listen to their children read a familiar book and put a sentence, written on a sentence strip and cut up word by word, in the correct order. Parents were asked to sign a form indicating that they had worked with their children.

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Several coordinators mentioned that if parents were unable or unwilling to help, someone at the school would read with the child. Two coordinators mentioned that they were reluctant to accept children into the program in cases where parents might not be supportive.

Five of the programs held seminars for and/or gave a video to parents to help explain the program. At least five coordinators mentioned that parents were invited to observe a lesson. Four mentioned that progress reports were sent home with students or that conferences were held with parents. One mentioned that parents were asked to complete a contract outlining their role in supporting their children.

Question 17: *How is the program evaluated? What do your data show about the effectiveness of the program?*

Some coordinators collected extensive and, in some cases, longitudinal data to evaluate their programs. Three coordinators gave the interviewers detailed reports explaining the data. Others had collected nothing or had collected the data but had not analyzed it.

Of those who had collected data, the programs appeared successful. Data were often reported in percentages of students who had made a year's growth in reading or who were reading at grade level by the time they exited from the program; these percentages ranged from 75% to 91%.

Very few programs had collected longitudinal data. One notable exception is a program that tracked students' reading achievement six years after they had been in the program. It found that 86% of these students were reading at grade level as measured by the results of an Informal Reading Inventory. A second program had collected data for three years. Its results showed that 75% of students who were in the program for at least 51 lessons (about 11 weeks) no longer needed additional help in reading the following year. By fourth grade only 5% of those students who were in the program as first graders were in need of additional help.

Several coordinators working in programs where data were not collected and/or were collected but not analyzed estimated the amount of growth made by students. One coordinator who said, "We've collected data for two years but haven't had time to analyze it," estimated that 80% of students who had been in the program maintained the reading levels they had achieved when exiting the program.

What was used to evaluate student achievement varied from program to program. At least four used Clay's Observation Survey (1985; 1993a). Two programs used district reading assessments, one used teacher surveys, another mentioned using teacher judgment, and yet another mentioned the use of benchmark books. There was no mention of the use of standardized tests to measure student achievement.

Question 18: *Is the program related/tied to classroom instruction? If so, please describe.*

Six programs provide training for classroom teachers in the hopes that working one-on-one with a student would give teachers the skills they needed to apply the same strategies to groups of students in their classrooms. As one coordinator said, "Impacting classroom instruction is an important part of our program." In many cases, these training programs were provided in hopes

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that instruction in classrooms would more closely parallel that found in the early intervention programs. The sole purpose of one program was to impact classroom instruction.

Several coordinators mentioned that when students reach the time when they will exit the program, early intervention teachers use the same materials as the classroom teacher so that the children make a smoother transition into the classroom reading program.

One coordinator mentioned that because of the training that classroom teachers had received, more were using running records to assess their students, just as the early intervention teachers were doing. At least one coordinator mentioned that all primary teachers in the district were required to give running records as part of the district assessment program.

In two districts, coordinators were training teachers to teach EGR groups (Emergent Guided Reading groups). Guided reading lessons in these groups were based on the strategies used in the early intervention programs in those districts.

OBSERVATIONS OF LESSONS

Each coordinator was asked to recommend someone who the interviewers could observe teaching what might be considered a "typical lesson" in that particular program. Coordinators were asked to recommend someone who would teach what might be considered a "best example" of the lesson.

In two instances small group lessons were observed, with three to four children in each group. All other lessons were taught one-to-one. This section of the report will summarize the interviewers' observations.

Materials Used

All teachers used some kind of form on which to record their running records. Many had the students use what are called "white boards," erasable boards that students could write on. Students would use these boards to generate new words from a word in the text. For example, if a word from the text ended with *and*, the teacher would ask students to write *and* with a line in front of it. She might then ask students what letter they needed to add to *and* to make *hand*. Students would write the new word.

Several teachers used plastic magnetic letters and a magnetic board to reinforce a teaching point. For example, one teacher made the word *not* out of plastic letters. She showed the student how by taking the *t* off, the word became *no*.

The most common reading materials were "little books" published by companies such as Rigby and the Wright Group. Most teachers had a wide variety of these books and each were leveled by difficulty in some way.

Alphabet strips were often used by students to see what a letter looked like. In all programs, students had journals or other types of notebooks to write in. The top of the page was a "practice" page where the student practiced how to write certain words. The teacher would often write on this page along with the student. The bottom of the page or notebook was where the child wrote the sentence in his/her own writing. Any mistakes in spelling were corrected. Most teachers used sentence strips of some kind to write the child's sentence on. After a sentence had

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been written, the teacher often cut it up into words. Students would work to put the sentence together so that it "made sense" and "sounded right." These sentences were sent home along with a familiar text.

Kinds of Encouragement Given

Each interviewer observed many different types of encouragement during the lessons. Without exception, the comments were positive. Many focused on helping students become independent, strategic readers. Examples include:

- "Let's see if that word matches when we look at it."
- "Good job!"
- "I saw you get your mouth ready for that word."
- "Good cross-checking of picture clues."
- "I saw you do something terrific, you...."
- "Yes, you were thinking about what would make sense."
- "You are right. You didn't need me; you used your finger, and read it fast to get the meaning."
- "I like the way you did it in your mind first."

As one interviewer noted, "The praise was almost constant, consistent, and focused on specific strategies. The comments were explicitly centered around the reading behaviors."

Match of Lessons with Information from Interviews

For the most part, the steps of the lesson described by the coordinator as important to the lesson were observed. In at least three observations, the teacher did not complete all steps of the lesson, usually due to the fact that the lesson had gone beyond 30 minutes and the student had to return to the classroom. In one instance, the student only completed the reading of a text started the day before.

All coordinators said that the lesson should be 30 minutes in length. This was observed in four instances. All other lessons took longer, ranging from 35 minutes to 55 minutes. In the two lessons that included small groups, the lessons took 30 minutes.

Engagement of Students

All three observers reported that the children in the lessons seemed engaged and motivated. In fact, one observed that a child seemed so engaged and worked so hard that she seemed "quite tired" at the end of the lesson. All three observers noted how proud the children seemed of themselves at the end of the lesson. In only one instance was it observed that a child seemed unhappy. When asked to read a book for a running record, the child said, "I hate this book." He did participate fully in the rest of the lesson, however.

General Sense of the Lessons

In all instances where the lessons were taught in 30 minutes, the observers noted how focused the lessons were and how quickly they moved along. Even in some cases where lessons lasted longer than 30 minutes, they seemed focused. In all but one case, the teachers appeared well prepared. All observers commented on how easily the teachers were able to prompt the students and how much each teacher seemed to know about the student as a reader.

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In two instances, the observer commented that there did not seem to be much "real" reading, but a lot of time was spent "working on words" that had been selected from the text. In another instance, the observer noted that the teacher always prompted a child who encountered an unknown word with, "Look at that first sound." In this case, prompting the child to use a variety of strategies was not observed.

DISCUSSION

The discussion that follows is based on the information learned from interviews and from observing the lessons. In all fairness to those who were interviewed, additional information may have been given if different questions had been asked, if answers had been prompted in different ways, or if a different lesson or several lessons had been observed.

One way to discuss the results of this study is to return to Pikulski's "characteristics common to successful reading intervention programs." If Pikulski is to be believed, each of the early intervention programs involved in this study should reflect each of his characteristics if they are to be considered successful. The chart below summarizes how each program meets those characteristics. The twelve programs are listed down the left side of the chart as numbers. (Note: Although the chart at the beginning of the report lists thirteen programs, the program that is implemented in two different districts and coordinated by the same person is listed one time on the chart below.) These numbers in no way match the order of the programs listed at the beginning of this study. The characteristics are listed across the top as numbers. These numbers match the numbered characteristics listed on page 3 of this report.

Match of Programs in Study with Pikulski's Characteristics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
2		x	x	x		x	x	x	x			x			x	x
3	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
4	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
6	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
7	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x			x	x
8		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
9		x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x			x	x
10		x	x	x		x		x	x			x			x	x
11		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
12		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x

From examining the data from the chart, it appears that many of the programs in the study did not depend on "strong, effective programs of regular reading instruction" (number 1 on Pikulski's list). In fact, coordinators of many of the programs in the study lamented the fact that

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students returned to classrooms where reading instruction did not match that of the early intervention lesson. It was a goal of many of the programs to change the practice of classroom teachers to better match what took place in the early intervention lessons, but many found this a slow process. As was mentioned previously, one program's sole purpose was to change the practice of classroom teachers.

Although all program coordinators considered reading for meaning (number 2 on Pikulski's list) as an overall goal, none mentioned directly that fluency was a major goal (number 5 on Pikulski's list). If those interviewed were asked about this, it is predicted that almost all, if not all, would have said that fluency is certainly one of the goals. Students who are fluent readers are better able to comprehend what they read. Therefore, fluency may have been considered a part of comprehension by the coordinators. It appeared from the observations of the lessons that fluency was directly correlated with text selection. If a text was selected that enabled the student to be successful yet challenged him or her to apply strategies, then the reading tended to be more fluent.

Number 10 on Pikulski's list, "there is considerable teacher decision making within a well-defined sequence of instructional activities," was interpreted by the researchers to mean that the program had a defined set of steps that were part of each lesson. Within each step teachers could make instructional decisions based on the needs of the child. Teachers were not, however, given the latitude of deleting parts of a lesson. In several instances, the researchers observed lessons that lasted too long (see next paragraph) or did not include each of the steps, despite the fact that the coordinators of each of the programs outlined carefully what the steps of a lesson should be. Students who are in early intervention programs need consistency in teaching. The lesson must include the same steps every day.

Number 11 on Pikulski's list, "instruction is fast paced," was interpreted by the researchers to include the fact that the lesson should be completed in 30 minutes. Even though most of the lessons (seven out of 11) were fast paced, many took longer than 30 minutes. One "hallmark" of a good early intervention lesson is that all parts of the lesson should be completed in 30 minutes (Lyons, Pinnell & DeFord, 1993; DeFord, Lyons & Pinnell, 1991). This takes an enormous effort on the part of both teacher and student. Teachers only get better with practice and good coaching.

"Assessment that is meaningful, practical, efficient, and ongoing" was number 14 on Pikulski's list. The researchers interpreted this to mean that not only were teachers using running records and observation to inform their instruction, but coordinators were collecting short-term and longitudinal data on their programs. Using this expanded definition, eight of the programs met the criteria. Data collection that is both short term and longitudinal should be a part of any program.

"Teacher training that is practical and ongoing" was number 14 on Pikulski's list. Only six of the programs included in the study met this criteria in the opinion of the researchers. Taken into consideration was the amount of coursework and coaching that was provided by each program. Those programs deemed the most successful have a huge amount of coursework, usually incorporated into a class for college credit, and a great deal of coaching. Several of the programs in this study had limited coaching, although coordinators always hoped for more. Limited amounts of coaching mean that teachers are more likely to delete portions of lessons and extend the lesson beyond 30 minutes. They are less likely to select appropriate material for the students to read, and are less likely to correctly prompt students when miscues (deviations from print) are made.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several recommendations that can be made based on the results of this study. For districts interested in implementing "researched-based" early intervention programs, the following should be considered:

1) **Conduct a self-assessment.** Those who coordinate early intervention programs should, in concert with the teachers who are teaching in the program, complete a self-assessment of how they match up to Pikulski's characteristics. Those teaching in the program know it better than anyone else. Honest assessment and evaluation can only strengthen a program.
2) **Keep the pupil-teacher ratio small.** One-on-one appears to be the most effective. This format, however, is expensive. If districts want to implement early intervention programs using small groups, the groups should be no larger than three. Teachers who work with these groups should spend a considerable amount of time working one-on-one with a student before moving on to groups.
3) **Instruction should be consistent**. Five days a week is optimal.
4) **Teachers should have a wide variety of texts to select from**. Texts should be carefully leveled according to criteria that all teachers understand. There are many sources to help teachers level texts including leveling systems used by Reading Recovery or by Fountas and Pinnell (1996).
5) **Lessons should have clearly defined components that are included in <u>each</u> session.** The steps should closely match those used in Reading Recovery. (See Question 8 for suggestions). Each lesson should last about 30 minutes.
6) **Paraprofessionals should not be the sole providers of instruction for children who struggle with reading.** Certified teachers should be used.
7) **Any early intervention program MUST have a coaching component that is rigorous and consistent.** Teachers new to the program must be coached at least once every two weeks. Those who have been teaching in a program for two or three years may need less coaching. Teachers must also participate in support groups that regularly meet and all teachers should teach "behind the glass" in order to improve their teaching. Coaching is so essential to a program's success that unless funds are available to implement it well, a district is better off not implementing an early intervention program.
8) **A home component should be a part of the program.** Parents should expect to help their child with reading each night.
9) In order to determine how successful a program is, **data should be collected** that include student achievement, parent involvement/feedback, and students' views of themselves as readers. Data should be collected and analyzed each year. Longitudinal data should be a part of any data collection.
10) **Districts should implement only one early intervention program**. Having more than one program tends to splinter teachers, staff development efforts, and a common philosophy about teaching struggling readers.

None of the recommendations can be implemented without money and time. If districts are truly focused on implementing the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (H.B. 1139), sound early intervention programs are essential. Money and time will have to be found to make these programs work.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

District_____
Person interviewed_____
Date of interview_____

1. What is the research base for your program?

2. What are the goals of your program?

3. What needs did you see in your district that led you to choose this particular model?

4. What are the most important features of your program?

5. How is the program funded? (find out if Title I funds are used, and if so, for what)

6. How many 1) schools (out of total number of elementary schools), 2) children, and 3) teachers are involved across the district? Are paraprofessionals and other non-certified people involved? If so, how?

7. What is the pupil/teacher ratio? (Is the instruction one-on-one or in small groups?)

8. What does a typical lesson look like?. (list parts) (Ask for handouts which help describe this.) How does this lesson vary from the one used in Reading Recovery? How long (in minutes) is a typical lesson?

9. How are children selected into the program? (How are students identified?)

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10. How do students exit from the program? What is the length of intervention for a "typical" child?

11. What kind of training and coaching are provided for the teachers/ parapros/other non-certified staff?

12. Are there parts of your program you would like to improve or change? Please describe. What would it take to make these improvements?

13. What do the teachers say about the program?

14. What do the students say about the program?

15. What do parents say about the program?

16. Is there a home/school component to your program? If so, please describe it.

17. How is the program evaluated? What do your data show about the effectiveness of the program?

18. Is the program related/tied to classroom instruction? If so, please describe.

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APPENDIX B: LESSON OBSERVATION FORM

Person observed_____ School/dist/program_____
Setting/date_____ Length of obsrv_____

1. Describe, in general, what was observed.

2. What materials or aids did the teacher use?

3. What kind of encouragement did the teacher give the student?
When was it given?

4. How closely did the steps of the lesson match the information given in the interview? If it varied, describe what/how.

5. Was the child engaged? What evidence do you have?

6. Describe your general sense of the lesson. Was it successful? Why or why not? Did the student(s) and teacher seem comfortable?

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